

REMARKS

Claims 1 through 23 are pending in the case. Dependent claims 21 through 23 have been added to more fully set out subject matter Applicant regards as inventive.

Examiner has rejected claims 1 through 5, 9 through 13 and 17 through 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by USPN 6,778,869 (Champion). Examiner has rejected claims 6 through 8 and 14 through 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Champion in view of USPN 6,014,569 (Bottum).

Applicant is enclosing herewith a Declaration under Rule § 1.131 to overcome the rejections.

Applicant notes that Champion was filed on December 11, 2000. The Declaration under Rule § 1.131 shows conception of the present invention before December 11, 2000. The present case was filed on August 1, 2001. Applicant notes that the preparation of a patent application was diligently performed during this interval.

Conclusion

Applicant believes this Amendment has placed the present case in condition for allowance and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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